

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH

SEPTEMBER 7, 2010

Roughly five years ago, a developer constructed a multi-family apartment building at 2435 Florencita Avenue in unincorporated Montrose. While the building was under construction, and based upon complaints from neighbors, County staff visited the site to confirm the precise location of natural grade and the height of the building. Upon further review, staff determined that information on the plans and applications provided by the applicant was inaccurate, and the resulting building was constructed in excess of the permitted height. After thorough review and analysis, staff ordered the developer to remove one unit from the top of the building in order to reduce the height to comply with the Zoning Ordinance.

More recently, on a property at 2626-2636 Foothill Boulevard in unincorporated La Crescenta, a developer started grading for a proposed office building. While the site was being graded, and based upon complaints from neighbors, County staff visited the site to confirm the precise location of natural grade and the height of the proposed building. Upon further review, staff determined that information on the plans and application provided by the applicant was inaccurate, resulting in the wrong determination of natural grade. County staff suspended the grading permit and directed the developer to submit plans that accurately reflect existing site conditions before the permit would be reinstated.

The fundamental problem in both the Florencita and Foothill cases is that County staff relied upon plans provided by the developer without visiting the site to insure their accuracy. In the Foothill case, for example, the plans showed a flat site, when, in fact, the site is flat only on the front of the property and has a severe grade change in the rear portion. The measurement is critical, in that a determination of natural grade determines how height is measured. Correctly determining the baseline for measuring height has significant ramifications for the appearance, massing, and impacts of a building upon surrounding property-owners. In the Foothill case, because single-family residences abutting the property are down-slope, the height impacts can be even more severe. In the Florencita case, the additional height at the front of the building severely impacted viewsheds from several adjoining properties.

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RIDLEY-THOMAS _____

YAROSLAVSKY _____

KNABE _____

ANTONOVICH _____

MOLINA _____

It is important that residents have faith in County staff's ability to review plans and applications to insure that what is being submitted is accurate. In both the Florencita and Foothill cases, County staff's initial review of the developer-provided information was inadequate. Additionally, it should not fall to neighbors to bring these inaccuracies to the County's attention. The confusion on both of these projects presents an undue burden on surrounding property-owners who, again, should not be doing the work that County staff is supposed to be doing.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Director of Regional Planning and the Director of Public Works to:

- Investigate the cases at 2435 Florencita Avenue in Montrose and 2626-2636 Foothill Boulevard in La Crescenta and identify what went wrong in terms of staff review, of grade and height relative to the proposed development projects;
- Identify remedies that can be implemented to prevent such errors from occurring on future development; and
- Report back to the Board of Supervisors in 90 days with their findings.

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